

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Smokemdanos dba Dano's Specialty Salsa

#### Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership

#### Hickory Road BBQ & Catering Co. Takes New Product to Market

##### Client Profile:

Hickory Road BBQ & Catering Company is a restaurant located in Auburn, Nebraska, specializing in American barbecue. The family-owned business employs 6 people.

##### Situation:

Hickory Road BBQ owners Dan and Rachelle Emshoff started their barbecue and catering business in 1997. Shortly thereafter, Dan began experimenting with his own salsa recipes. It took a few years to perfect, but eventually they had a product they could serve at Hickory Road BBQ alongside their homemade chips. As a result of the product's popularity, the Emshoffs decided to package the salsa for retail sale and contacted the Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Nebraska MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

##### Solution:

The Emshoffs enrolled in Nebraska MEP's Food Processing Center's Food Entrepreneurship Assistance Program (FEAP) for assistance with the development of their salsa. First, they attended the Center's 'From Recipe to Reality' workshop which covered the basics of starting a food business. After initial consultation with the staff at the Nebraska MEP Food Processing Center, the Emshoffs continued into the next phase of FEAP, 'From Product to Profit', which consisted of one-on-one technical and business development assistance to create a market-ready product. Bethany Jackson, a food scientist at The Food Processing Center, assisted the Emshoffs with formulating their product for commercial processing and creating a nutritional facts panel and FDA-approved product label. Jackson also guided the Emshoffs through the basic requirements for processing acidified foods. Jill Gifford, FEAP Manager, assisted in connecting the Emshoffs with the Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP), which extended a low interest loan for the development of their new business venture. The assistance provided by Nebraska MEP enabled the Emshoffs to modify their foodservice product for distribution to the consumer retail market, providing another stream of revenue for the restaurant entrepreneurs. With the help of Gifford, the Emshoffs searched for a co-packer to manufacture their salsa, eventually settling on Original Juan's out of Kansas City. Using the scaled-up formulation developed at The Food Processing Center, a test batch was run, and the salsa went into production in April 2008. The new product, Dano's Specialty Sauces, was initially marketed in numerous stores across the state, including both retail supermarkets and specialty food stores. It is also sold online on the Emshoffs' website as well as through GROW Nebraska, a website dedicated to promoting Nebraska products and services.

##### Results:

\* Increased sales by \$10,000.

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\* Achieved a more competitive and profitable position.

#### **Testimonial:**

"The Nebraska MEP Food Processing Center was vital in making our business a reality. They guided us in the right direction and helped us make educated decisions about our options. Everyone we have worked with from The Food Processing Center has been professional and knowledgeable. Anyone who wants to turn their dream into reality should save valuable time and money by seeking the assistance of these wonderful people."

Rachelle Emshoff, President